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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

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January 13, 2006

The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary
Department of Defense
1300 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1300

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:

I am writing to address several areas in which the Department of Defense has been unresponsive to oversight efforts of the Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information and International Security. For the sake of the war effort and the taxpayer trust, the Department's financial management must be subject to Congressional oversight.

The Department has failed to agree to testify at a field hearing in Chicago entitled "Big Ticket Waste: How Much are Unused Federal Buildings Costing the Taxpayers?" before the Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, and International Security. The invitation for this hearing was received by the Department's Office of Legislative Affairs on Wednesday, January 11, 2006. The hearing will examine initiatives agencies have or have not taken to promote efficiency in maintaining real property portfolios. The Department will be one of several witnesses, but perhaps the most important because it has more real-estate authority than GSA. Further, the Department estimates spending **\$3-4 billion** each year maintaining *unnneeded* facilities.

Last September your agency refused the Subcommittee's request for a witness at a hearing entitled, "How Does the Federal Government Lease Needed Space?" With the Department engaged in such important efforts to protect America, this evasion of Congressional oversight must not become a pattern.

In addition to this apparent pattern of boycotting the Subcommittee's oversight hearings, the Department has ignored oversight letters on the following subjects:

- 1) Conference expenditures: Sent on July 12, 2005
- 2) Unobligated balances at the Department: Sent on June 22, 2005
- 3) Travel by Members of Congress: Sent on Dec 2, 2005

The national security of our country is an essential constitutional obligation of the federal government and I value the honorable work you are doing to protect Americans. I look forward to working with you to ensure that every dollar that is appropriated for defense is available for the Department's critical mission. Please contact Katy French with my Subcommittee staff at 202.224.2254 to further discuss the Subcommittee's oversight efforts and address any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Coburn', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tom Coburn
Chairman, M.D.
Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management,
Government Information, and International Security